OPENING AND CLOSING ADDRESSES

TO THE

New College Theological Society,

SESSION 1882-83.

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Thomas F. Torrance

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CHRIST THE CENTRE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

ALEXANDER MARTIN, M.A.

UNION TO CHRIST THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

BY

THOMAS GREGORY, M.A.

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Opening Address.

CHRIST THE CENTRE OF CHRISTIANITY.

By Alexander Martin, M.A.

Gentlemen,—

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I propose to address to you now a few remarks on "The Personal Christ as the Centre of Christianity." Amidst much in our day which cannot but cause deep anxiety to all who would seriously hold fast the faith, one hails gladly the increasingly great interest shown in the determination and representation of the historical person Christ. The "clank of machinery," which was hinted at in our hearing the other day, has indeed been too long heard, or at least a mode of regarding religious matters which tended that way, has been more than enough insisted upon; and theology and religion must alike be benefited by the growing emphasis now laid upon the imperial Personality, which gives unity and life to both. But, unhappily, the misuse of benefits is not uncommon. History, in the Church as well as elsewhere, moves, as a rule, between extremes; reaction from a mechanical way of exhibiting and applying truths may be in danger of leading through truth to error; and the compensations and adjustments which in the long run eliminate this are often long in coming. At present, as it seems to me, we run a risk of this kind. And the following remarks have

been written under the very deep conviction of two things—viz., first, that the theological and, so far, religious gain referred to is a very real and solid one; and second, that in proving and applying it, we have need to be very careful that we take no narrow view of this wonderful Person—that we reduce Him to no mere human limits, however high or wide, —but in all our theological apprehensions and speculations, as well as in a more practical reference, hold fast by the catholic doctrine and confessedly great mystery of God manifest in the flesh. The most comprehensive and effective method of establishing such a position is, probably, to show Christ's unique and manifold relation to the various elements and aspects of that specific dealing of God with His world which we name Redemption, and what follows is intended to furnish a few suggestions in this direction. I should say, however, that my aim is expository rather than apologetic, and that throughout I shall make assumptions which, to another audience, would have to be proved, but which, in the circumstances, may perhaps pass. Without further preface, then, I remark—

1. That Christ is the centre of Christian Revelation.

I do not here purpose entering upon the speculative aspects of the truth this proposition contains. These, no doubt, are many and important. It would be highly interesting, *e.g.*, to discuss how, since the whole plan and process of creation lead up to man, and the elements of human nature to what is ethical, the aim of Revelation is fittingly, though partially, attained in the appearance of a perfect man sent forth from God; and how, further, since no man stands alone but humanity is essentially organic, Revelation's end is so far reached in the establishment by Him of an organic Church in vital union with its Head. It being admitted also that man is, by some means or other, estranged from his God, it might be argued that the Revelation which sought the removal of such estrangement included as a necessary factor in it the manifestation of one in whom the reconciliation of God and humanity should be actually effected, and in and from whom, therefore, the individual might start as from the

properly religious standpoint. God, too, it might be said, from His very nature, seeks to communicate Himself to His creatures, and to make them fully—to the fulness, *i.e.*, of their measure—recipient of Him: what more befitting, then, than that in making this purpose known and in carrying it through He should make the crowning feature of it all a God-man? But, meanwhile, to this high *à priori* road let us prefer the humbler track of history—of the actual facts of God's revelation of grace,—marking how they all lead up to and are centred in the Christ.

The Divine-historical agency named "Revelation" may be said to have a two-fold aim: to reveal God and to redeem man. It would not be difficult to unify these—perhaps it is somewhat rude treatment to disjoin them—but, as merely provisional, and for the purpose in hand, the analysis may be allowed.

As to the former, then, God's self-revelation, the method He adopted was the historical method, and the process was intricate and long. God had taken to do with man concerning this matter for some 2000 years before He could satisfactorily, and in a way suitable both to Him and to us, attain His end. The stretch of events which meantime transpired was complex and varied. It included the growth of a family into a nation, the institution and free play of the manifold relations, domestic and foreign, of the people so formed, the rise and decay of their successive modes of government, their repeated domination by alien powers, their final dissolution and ruin. But while thus on the human side national events were allowed to develop themselves according to ordinary human law, the history contains other features which only carelessness or perversity can refuse to acknowledge as quite peculiar and unique, and which evidently bear a high spiritual import. Israel was nothing if not religious. She embodied in her life and institutions and carried forward in her progress a great redemptive purpose, exhibited broad Divine principles of truth, bore within her powerful forces making for salvation. In her methods of government, in her social organisation, in her moral legislation, in her religious arrange-

ments, she testified to a self-revealing God, and progressively made Him known. She did this in perfectly *historical* fashion, and with her face to the future; in a way, *i.e.*, which always left it to be understood that further revelations had yet to be made, the gift or attainment which at any stage satisfied her most pressing need still leaving her highly expectant. That the great God had once for all definitively taken up the religious concern of man, and was practically dealing with it with a view to perfect settlement, so much was clearly understood and accepted; but how and by what methods and appliances this should be effected, was left in large measure uncertain and obscure. His utter hatred of sin, *e.g.*, was rendered by manifold experiences indubitable; but how He was finally—finally, *i.e.*, so far as man was concerned—to dispose of it, did by no means appear. And so the Coming One, whom many things suggested and even made sure, was looked for wistfully, undoubtingly—now one feature of Him being descried through the darkness and now another, the ear ever strained to catch the far-off footstep, and the far-off voice saying, "Lo, I come."

Now the point to be insisted on here is, that the spiritual and natural phenomena in Israel's history did not just flow onward side by side; they overflowed into each other, or became inextricably immeshed with each other, and together formed one indissoluble whole. God, that is to say, in all His dealings with His people, took ordinary facts, events, and relations as His starting-point, and gave them spiritual significance. The securing of a suitable territory, the gaining of a battle, are facts earthly enough in themselves, but it is just in such facts as these that God based His redeeming truth and power. He transfigured and glorified the elements of this world in making them subserve His purpose of grace —*they* became for the time being the concrete embodiment of those everlasting principles of truth and grace which finally came in their purity and fulness by Jesus Christ. In other words, when God would save men and progressively exhibit to them how He did so, He accomplished His purpose, not by words, but by deeds; not by directly teaching

them theoretical principles of truth, but by exercising within them and on their behalf gracious redemptive energies, which interwove themselves with their common human experience and history, and in which, therefore, theoretical principles could be afterwards discerned. But what, now, is this but to say, that, apart from that solidarity of *matter* in the Old Testament and in the New, which secures (in Calvinistic phraseology) sameness of "substance" under difference of "administration," the *form* also in which the matter is moulded is the same? If the special note of the New Testament revelation be, that in it God so fully enters into our history that He becomes veritably man — truly Immanuel—then the Old Testament can be shown to lead up to it and without it to be incomplete. For the implication of its entire process was that God Himself was coming into relation with the course of human events; was Himself personally and actually becoming historical. His method of self-revelation was indeed historical, for it was a progressive insertion of His own activity and His own personality into the course of the world's affairs; and what possible ultimate issue could this have but in His becoming finally true man? In Israel's history God, if one might say so, gradually edged Himself into the course of the world's life, and, even on its formal side,* it was but the natural consummation of the process which was reached when He at last stood up in that wonderful and unique Personality who proclaimed Himself God as well as man. In short, *historicity* in the method of revelation is implicitly and by way of promise *Incarnation.*

Looking now more specially to the aspect which revelation bears towards *man,* one is again impressed with the alone importance of the Person Christ. For revelation is emphatically redemption, has that for one great motive and aim, and

* The *substantial* unity of revelation as effected in Christ is too large a matter to be more than noted here. To show how the revealing doctrines and redeeming agencies treated in both Old and New Testaments are alike completed in Him, or first *have justice done them* in His living Personality, would require a separate paper; while this, as it stands, is too long. Besides, these points are more or less directly referred to, pp. 15-19.

in this respect also may be seen as consummated in the living Person of the Redeemer.

And here let us not take too narrow a view of what redemption implies. It may be true, perhaps, for most men that the prime necessity of redemption for them lies in their sin; they are at variance with the world's law, and no individual striving can heal the breach. But the matter concerned,—though covering this, and indeed holding this, in one sense, for its main issue,—is wider than any such experience; the problem of redemption is the problem of human life; and Christ is the Redeemer that suits us, because life in Him is solved.

That certainly cannot be said of others; of Christ alone can it be said that life was to the liver a conquered thing. Other men wonder at life, they fear it, are overwhelmed by it. Many things in it they cannot master,—chiefly, perhaps, three. Thus, they do not grasp its *meaning*. By which I intend, not that they fail to seize the significance of this or that circumstance or fact which presents itself at any time, of any single phenomenon or event, or even of any one force of wide action and influence. They do so fail, and frequently; in a strict sense, always. But more than that, what have they to say to the meaning of life as a whole? By what conception shall they take in its entire reach? Its mysterious origin—its strangely complex and surely meaningful present—the little sleep that rounds it—the purport and drift of it—what can men say to all this? how shall they conceive it? Is it not the case that they stumble helplessly, and are bewildered and baffled, content in the long run perforce with a bare probability here and a leap into the dark hereafter?

Failing to solve the sphinx's riddle of the meaning of life, they are not likely to attain to its *mission*. For a mission of some sort it also surely does present, a practical purpose to be effected, an end to be gained, a work to be done. But what shall we say that is? We may live to ourselves; but does it satisfy us?—or to others; but is it worth while?—or to whatever is higher than us; but again, *cui bono?* The

world passeth away and its works, as well as the lust thereof, and is not anything abiding unsure ?

Lastly, had we the meaning of life at our feet and its mission well in hand, what shall we say of our *mastery* of life's forces ? Great forces there are in life, heaving and palpitating on all sides of us, pulsing throughout our being ; high intellectual forces of thought and feeling, mighty moral forces of action and destiny. They play about us and in us, these forces, and their plaything is ourselves. They sway and impel us, and toss us to and fro ; we are their slaves, and not their masters ; they scorn us and our puny power " as the tempest scorns the chain." For is it not in dealing practically and from day to day with the active elements of life that we come to know our human limitation, our infirmity, above all, our *sin* ? And the discovery is overwhelming when a man takes in its truth ; when it came to the noble Paul at least, he " *died.*" Insignificance reaching to nothingness, helplessness become paralysis, and utter guilt—what can humanity bent under such a burden do but cry with him, " Who shall deliver me ? "

It is here now that Revelation, in this aspect of it, meets us and is consummated in the life and death of the God-man. For in Christ God actually and personally enters into human life, and conquers it once for all. He takes no half measures with it ; He deals with it and all its responsibilities fairly and honestly. He shrinks from no element of it which is truly human, despises no task because it is humble, shirks no experience because it brings pain. Rather does He straighten Himself to the uttermost and submit to its weariest condition, that, having sounded the depths of human life as well as scaled its heights, He may know and conquer it throughout. And so God becomes flesh, and the Son is made in all things like unto His brethren. Yet, how unlike ! For His experiences are far beyond ours in point of difficulty and distress, and still He is King throughout them all. The difficulties He had to face were more and more fearful than we can know, but they none of them hindered His onward march. His sorrows we cannot understand, yet He was not

overborne, nor was His faith shaken. His work was simply infinite—fully to reveal God, perfectly to redeem a world, to establish a kingdom which should be universal and eternal; and all within the limits of a brief human life! But He could kneel to His Father before He left the earth, and say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Intellectual inquiries and speculative problems as such He indeed left untouched; their practical bearings constituted *His* problem, while for the rest, He was content to take them as He found them. But surely the practical meaning of life was solved to Him who knew whence He came and whither He went, and whose fellowship with the Father was unbroken. Its mission was realised by Him who could say His contribution to the working out of the One abiding Will—which through all the world's effort spreads deep and wide—was completed; and all life's forces were mastered by Him who laid His strong hand upon them that they might minister to His work, and who, in especial, not only knew no sin, but wrestled with it and slew it. Life, then, was to Christ a conquered thing; human life was by Him purified, glorified, redeemed. Hence the great meaning of His constant severance of Himself from the world: "I have overcome the world,—the prince of it cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Not with calm ease, as we know, was the victory won; indeed, it would not have been won had not suffering beyond what we can appreciate been present. And so He always is bowed with sorrow, and passes on before us as consistently and *par excellence* the Man of Sorrows. His fearful "hour" looms on Him from the time He begins His work, weighs on Him, increases till it becomes a fierce baptism which He *must* be baptised with, and finally costs Him an agony with which we hardly dare even to sympathise. But from the struggle He rises victor, and from the scene of it He passes to meet His dread "hour" in kingly self-conquest and self-possession. The experience of the "hour" itself, in which eternal purposes were realised and eternal destinies were fixed, the inmost nature of Godhead was educed and the world's meaning was consummated, who shall attempt to

describe? Our experience is as nothing here, and the most reverent thinking fails. But one thing concerning it we do know. For, from the midst of the darkness that wrapped around His solitary Divinity throughout its awful moments, when justice was done for human guilt and human sin was slain, there came the cry that "it was finished"—a cry which, though the last faint sigh of a broken heart, was a very pæan of triumph rising from earth to heaven. For it signified that men were no longer to be awed and overwhelmed by human life, but made its masters. Life once for all had been "finished" by the God-man, and now was "theirs" in Him. He had not lived alone, nor did He die alone. Neither He Himself nor those who knew His meaning most intimately, ever regarded Him so. He lived and died in a very special sense *for* others, for His Church; or better, His Church, in idea and Divine intention, in principle and effect, lived and died *in* Him. Hence, I repeat, life was now the conquest of men—theirs, namely, in Him. All others it had met and overthrown, now itself had met its conqueror. For He who had devised it and made it, had now Himself entered into it and fulfilled it. Constantly, toilsomely, woefully, in the house and by the way, by day and by night, in health and in weakness, in the full vigour of life and in the very article of death, He, the Prince of Life, had overcome life and its death too, rifling it of its secret, plucking from it its sting, till at last there came the supreme moment when His "hour" had struck, and the world rose up redeemed.

This view of Revelation as consummated in the living Person of the Redeemer—in what, as Incarnate and grappling with all the responsibilities of human life, He is and does—has its own light to throw upon the absoluteness of our Christian religion in one aspect of that great fact. The religion of Christ, viz., is founded in the depths of human nature and life, and cannot therefore be surpassed in suitability or adequacy for human need. That is, it cannot be superseded. Other religions may appeal to this or that element of man's

nature or experience, to man so and so constituted and circumstanced, and may flourish wherever and so long as this or that interest is uppermost. But Christ founds His religion in the basal elements of human nature and history. His character embraces every true religious element of humanity. His life is a supreme victory amidst the poorest and basest conditions. Just because He is the Son of God, He is, and can afford to be, the Son of man. Hence the power of Christianity to appeal to all races and classes of men, and to every shade of man's experience. Christ's work rises from everything external and accidental to the essential man, is a thing accomplished once for all, is absolute and universal. Once He was rejected for the thief and murderer, "*wherefore*"—on strict argumentative and necessary grounds—"*wherefore* "also God hath highly exalted Him and given Him the name "which is above every name." The same result naturally follows from the perfection of the self-revelation of God in Christ, perfection in manner as well as in matter—from God's making Himself personally historical in Him who could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But this by the way.

In both aspects of the Revelation, then—whether you consider it as God's manifestation of Himself to man, or as His perfect redemption of man and his life—the Personal Christ is seen to be its centre and stay. You cannot take Him from it and leave anything worth having. In that case indeed, you have what is without meaning, and to the eye of reason a sheer wreck. At best you have but a fragment, an inception, a hint. All the lines of revelation converge on Christ; its network of principles and forces is gathered up in and upon Him; nothing else can bring them (as will be seen more fully immediately) to order and unity, nor do they seek anything greater than He. Christ, I repeat, is the centre of revelation.

One can hardly omit here a reference to the bearing all this has upon Scripture, and its essential meaning for us.

If the personal Christ is the centre of the Revelation, this fact must intimately concern its Record; for the latter is itself really not to be separated from the former, but being its living reflex, is its lasting continuation.

In the Old Testament, *e.g.*, you have as the burden of the whole, Christ. *That* is its one notion and purpose; and, apart from Him, it is at best a thing of fair kaleidoscopic fragments. And the reason is, that He Himself is in it personally superintending and directing its course. Its writers do not speak of themselves merely; its remarkable spiritual unity, to say nothing more, could not thus have been secured. They differ in time and circumstances, in character and whole outlook; while it, the book, is in its grand spiritual features one, and in this, as in other respects, unique. It is not easy to see what adequate explanation of this an opponent of Revelation can give; to us, who believe in Revelation, the difficulty does not occur. For Revelation is revelation of the one, unchanging God, and its historical exponents maintain at once its unity and progressiveness, inasmuch as it is not they who speak, but the Spirit of Christ, the Revealer, who is in them. Christ, it is to be remembered, on the one hand, is the organ of revelation; it is His varied activity that the different writers record. And, on the other hand, "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit;" and this Spirit was the Spirit of Christ. So that Christ is not only both the Agent and the Substance of Revelation, but indirectly, if the expression may be allowed, the Author of its Record also, thus in Old Testament and in New alike consistently, and through the ages, preaching *Himself*. In the gospels, again, you have Himself speaking; speaking not as one man to another, but as man never spake; speaking a revealing Word, which, because it is revealing, abides. And the later writings—what are they but the continued self-revelation of the Christ in the unfolding of His nature and position, His past work and present ceaseless energising, and the infinite, everlasting worth of it all to men?—the revelation here also being mediated by the same Spirit which was given without

measure to Him.* Take, then, this view of Scripture as the living reflex of the self-revelation of Christ, as the actual Word of the Spirit of Christ, who spoke in prophets and apostles, and most of all in Himself, together with the Christian doctrine of the needed aid of that same Spirit in order to the understanding of spiritual things, and you have this wonderful result: That Scripture is to the Spirit-enlightened man no mere dead letter, but the living voice of the living God, for in it he does not just possess an ancient and authentic record of his Master's ways with men, but through the Spirit comes face to face with the self-revealing Christ. An ordinary memoir, or, better, a portrait, brings before you a likeness of the friend you have lost, good enough, perhaps, but only a likeness still. The picture may be faithful and even happy, recalling to you vividly the features and suggesting the character of him who was dear to you. It meets your eye continually; you look at it fondly and often; it seems to welcome your entrance into the room, to follow your departure wistfully; your picture is very pleasant to you, and you prize it. But it is only a picture still—an image, a simulacrum. It really has no voice for you, no ear to hear your confidence. But in the picture Scripture paints for you your friend lives again. Your picture here is a

* It might fairly be questioned whether the Church at present lays sufficient emphasis upon the doctrine of the Spirit. Of course, one thing at a time; and if a fresh realisation of the personal, living Christ is the Church's latest gain, time must be allowed for its consolidation. But once you have set Christ—living, pitying, redeeming, reigning—full in the Church's view, using doctrine mainly to interpret the Person, glorifying "the system" by vivifying it, and reinstating His own order of "Me and My words," the question rises how all this is mediated to the Church and the individual. Instead of my acceptance being asked for a creed, a gracious Person offers Himself to my trust. But not just immediately: a certain process is involved here,—a process which becomes, perhaps, even more interesting to me when it covers my active response to the appeal. How does all this, especially this latter, come about? We may, no doubt, pass through the process unconscious of how it is effected; but so far as is possible, we would naturally like to see into its nature and ongoing. And the answer begins to appear when we read that "no man calleth Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Hence, though prophecy is "one of the most gratuitous forms of error," one may venture to surmise that we shall see before long a new insistance on the doctrine of the Spirit, accompanied surely by many good things for the Church.

living likeness, a speaking likeness. For in and by the Gospel Christ being dead yet speaketh; livingly, actually, presently speaketh, since, though He was dead, yet is He now alive, and behold He liveth for evermore. And so he who in faith approaches the sacred page with that Spirit within him whose function it is to take Christ and reveal His riches to men's hearts, as he looks on what is to others a mere dead picture, and perhaps untrue, finds his picture, by a blessed transformation, pass quite away, to leave in its room the wounded but glorious Person of his living and loving Redeemer.

2. I remark now, in the second place, that Christ is the centre of Christian Theology; and here I must be very brief.

This, of course, follows naturally from the former remark, for Christian Theology is just the science of Christian revelation, or such revelation seen into its principles and principle. Only to Christian theology do I wish at present to refer. That is to say, for my present purpose what is termed natural theology may be ignored. True enough, it is not to be wholly separated from Christ; He, as the all-pervading, everywhere active life and light of men, takes to do with it as with all human interests and industries, and with it, indeed, in an especial way, since it forms the logical and, so far, historical preparation for that revelation of which He is peculiarly the burden. Still its main character is that of presupposition for the more definite and detailed truth which from Abraham onwards was revealed, and the latter may, certainly, legitimately enough be considered *per se*. But of this latter, as just said, Christ is the burden; all its elements are focussed in Him, and the science of it all is not so much Theology as Christology. That the Person of Christ is the living centre here may be seen both in general and in detail.

Christian Theology is emphatically a science. Its object is a great complex,—a whole world of spiritual truths,—whose separate principles it has precisely to define, whose inner correlations it has to exhibit, and whose entire contents it

has livingly to unify. Moreover it is an historical science,—*i.e.*, it is concerned with principles which ruled and were embedded in a long and varied course of historical phenomena. Thus it may be termed a branch of the Philosophy of History. For this really is the task of the philosophy of history. It fixes upon, say, one particular section of human history as the object of its study. It takes with it one presupposition, which you may term a primary faith or a necessity of thought, as you please,—viz., that there is a Providence that shapes all ends; that the development of man and the progress of events are orderly; that the whole came from Reason, and is for Reason. This presupposition it seeks to prove by exhibiting it as active in the facts. It takes these, therefore, in the fullest and most accurate representation obtainable, and these it settles down upon, and broods over. Gradually what is accidental and of only passing worth shows itself in its true nature, and is allowed to fall away; incidental phenomena and insignificant persons fall into the background; glimpses here and there are caught of what is essential and abiding, which develop as contemplation is continued and concentrated into views of principles of truth and lasting forces of action, until finally, everything which was external and fortuituous merely having passed quite out of sight, the secret which is open to Reason is disclosed, and the period concerned stands out before the mind's eye in its inner notion and meaning. In this way the presupposition of the investigation is verified, and the blank formula of mere indefinite reasonableness, with which the student set out, is filled in with a complex of particular principles which he can define and concatenate.

So with the gigantic stretch of human history which covers the process of God's self-revelation. It, too, forms an unmistakable unity, and not only may, but in order to fair study must, be studied by itself. What a wealth, now, of spiritual principles it presents, principles crossing and recrossing in whole and in part, yet always blending into unity again. All the great matters of our life and destiny are dealt with here; the Moral constitution and ruling of our world, God its

Maker and Ruler, Sin and Redemption, Judgment and Eternity,—what vast and far-reaching truths concerning all these great factors of existence are intertwined with each other in and around the ordinary historical phenomena of this long period. Unlike other periods, too, this cannot but suggest the burden of meaning it bears. It all lies on the surface; hardly an incident is preserved but is luminous with a Divine purpose. Hence it is easy to see what the plan and main object of science here must be. Theology has to disentangle the principles referred to from the historical accretion in which they are exhibited and preserved, and hold up the fibrous net-work of them to the light of spiritual reason; and as the full force of Divine revelation rose to its height in Christ, so theology finds its centre and rest in Him who not only *speaks* the full truth, and *does* the truth, but Himself personally and livingly *is* it.

In the New Testament, of course, you have much more that is definitely doctrinal and theological than in the Old, and also much more definite employment of scientific method and statement. Positions are laid down and argued, connections are traced, a working body of divinity is attained. Yet even here what was said above holds, though in a more circumscribed sense. Science proper is not reached; doctrine, only in compacter masses, is still embodied in history,—the history of the growing Church, and especially of the apostles' experience. Doctrine in the New Testament, as in the Old, is present, on the whole, not as such, but as living and supporting life, and aglow with the faith and hope of men who are staking their destiny upon its truth; or, when not concerned with matters of so exclusively personal an interest, the measure of truth at any time given is still regulated by the rule of circumstance and occasion. The New Testament, *e.g.*, presents a complete philosophy of the Old Testament dispensation; yet not just *at a stroke*, and in logical completeness, but in fragments, and as the need in actual circumstances appears. The new science of Biblical Theology, indeed (new, *qua* science), is just a specially interesting department in the Philosophy of History. Here too, as else-

where, Christ is everything. No one can with any attention read the New Testament writings, or piece together the different views and principles of the various writers without perceiving that to each and all of them Christ is the one solution of the world and of life; that they owe everything to Him, and commit their all to Him. Not only for human life either, but for the universe, He is of unique importance: Christ is to them He absolutely "in whom all things consist."

So much in general; the merest word now more in detail. It is easy to see why the doctrine of the personal Christ should be accorded the central place in the theological system; it follows, indeed, from the very fact that His person has doctrinal significance at all. In no other system is it the case that its founder is doctrinally important. But the cardinal notion of Christianity is *mediation;* and moreover, mediation as a fact accomplished in a living mediator. Redemption is not merely *stated* by Christ, it is given in Him. God reconciles a guilty world to Himself in Him, and a general reconciliation of all things in Him is one day to be effected. He is, accordingly, the solution and harmony of the great opposites. He is the ideal become real, the eternal compressed into the form of time. The whole breadth of Deity collapses into apprehensibility in Him; the unsearchable resource of Godhead, being in Him "bodily," becomes in Him available for us. Human guilt disappears in Him, human poverty is swallowed up; at last the stature of perfect manhood is reached—viz., in Christ Jesus. In short, in Him, in Him personally and as living Head of His body, the Church God is freely and fully communicated to man, while man becomes, up to the extreme limit of his being, partaker of the Divine nature. No wonder, then, that it should be an easy and natural thing to give the doctrine of the personal Christ a central place in the theory of how all this is brought about. The other doctrines, greater and less, almost spontaneously arrange themselves around this. The doctrines of Godhead, of the World and Man, and the ruin brought on both by Sin, are evidently presupposition to the doctrine of Christ, and

together form the situation which calls it forth. The doctrines of the "offices," and their corollaries; the doctrines respectively of the Spirit by whom, and the Church in whom, the mediation is effected; and the doctrines, finally, of Eschatology, which exhibit how it is ultimately to be consummated—all these, together with their various implications, clearly lean upon the doctrine of the Mediator Himself. The roughest arrangement of the doctrines serves to group them around Him, and the most scientific can find no exacter or more truthful method. They lead to Him or return upon Him. In a word, Christian Theology is Christology.

3. I remark, thirdly, that Christ is the centre of Christian Apologetic.

We are all familiar with the fact that Apologetic has become in our days a somewhat different thing from what it was to our fathers. The old argument from prophecy has, in great part, taken on a different character; while, at the same time, to the man who is at all imbued with the historic sense, and has any perception of the universal power and presence of gradual evolution in the world and history around him, the argument so modified has become a more sure and lasting bulwark to faith. Miracles, again, meanwhile constitute to many an objection to Revelation rather than an attestation, though I cannot, for my own part, but believe that they are so inextricably knit up with Revelation that it cannot live if they be removed; that the *notion* of miracle is given in that of revelation as Divine personal interference with the ordinary world-process for special ends; that not only is miracle, therefore, a necessary implication of revelation in general, but that the particular miracles we find are entirely congruous to the nature of the dispensation in which they occur, and, when viewed not as outward seals to revelation so much as an integral part of it and as indicating its greater meanings, will be felt to have once more all their old convincing power. This will not be, however, till history come to its rights as it has not yet come; and when that change of attitude towards those questions has arrived, it

will not be the matter of miracles which will be first affected, but rather the conception to be formed of the historical person Christ.

For, I maintain, we are not at liberty to treat the historical questions connected with the appearance of Christ, and the apostolic representation of Him, with that indifference with which they are too commonly regarded. Strauss, indeed, no longer satisfies any one, and Baur's reading of the facts is coming to be recognised by all who are not frivolous as a gross exaggeration which one must very largely discount in forming an estimate of what actually was said and done by Christ and in His Church during the first and second centuries. But the evil effects of a false theory may survive after itself is disposed of, and in this case these are seen in the wide-spread disinclination to entertain any very firm or clear opinions concerning anything which took place, or has been said to have taken place in those early times. Hence, *e.g.* (not to speak of Schleiermacher), Ritschl's incontinent readiness to disconnect Christianity, and especially Christology, from everything scientific or historical, and to abandon all that to criticism. Christ's person, he maintains, is not to be determined by what He said or (in detail) did—which may, perhaps must, be uncertain to us,—but by what, on the whole, he effected, of which we have ample proof to this day. It is the general issue of the work that throws light upon the person, and only thus is the person to be reached. The forces Christ set in motion, and the results he accomplished, are supposed to imply certain qualifications, powers, and courses of action, and from their existing outcome he is to be determined. In this way we may conclude that Christ embodied in his life and work the holy and loving will of God, and drew men into fellowship with himself therein, thus founding the blessed kingdom of God, and fully realising God's purpose of grace (and therefore His general purpose) with the world. Now, this is only a definite example of a method of treating Christ's person which, in itself, is common, though often indefinite. And it is, I contend, on the whole a false method. Though interesting in itself, and capable of being turned to good

apologetic purpose, it would not appear to yield any very reliable conclusions as to Christ's bearing or character, while besides, and chiefly, it is nothing short of preposterous to think of giving history the go-by in this cavalier fashion. History is history. It lies before us in ascertained or ascertainable form, containing certain confusions and complications no doubt, but few, if any, which patient research cannot unravel, and it is nothing less than a sacred responsibility that lies upon us to use all diligence to find what actually and *re verâ* it has to say to us. We cannot afford to despise history, and it will not say much for our intelligence or be well for our faith if we do so.

If history, then, be honestly dealt with, no doubt prophecy and miracles will again come to be installed as Christian evidences —in modified form perhaps, and by so much the more powerfully evidential; yet only as subordinate to the prime argument of all, the historical person, Christ. For, after all, all other lines of Christian evidence lead up to and are consummated in Him. He is His own best evidence; shining in His own light, being as He claimed to be—and never more clearly than when He claimed to be—the Light of the World; and if the representation given of Him by tradition be vindicated at the bar of criticism, Apologetic will continue to lean on the position that certain facts in the world's history are inexplicable except on the theory that they disclose a self-revealing God manifest in the flesh. In this connection I would make three observations, premising that I have no intention of constructing an apologetic argument, but merely of indicating a three-fold method of construction:—

(1.) In speaking of Christ as the summation and consummation of Divine revelation, the point emphasised was that the latter culminated in a definite historical person, and this, as it seems to me, can fairly be made to serve an apologetic end. For what does it imply? This; that the grand redemptive purpose of God, embodying broad principles of Divine truth and large Divine activities, taking to do with man and man's affairs and all his life, becoming progressively connected and interlaced with veritable human history, at

length did, after some 2000 years of increasing manifestation of God and entanglement with the world, come by its perfection and full realisation in a single historical individual. Two thousand years of history would have been meaningless but for this man! Robbed of their fulfilment, they would have been bereft also of the notion which gave them unity and a purpose. He Himself says so; "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;" and His followers' main contention is that at last Israel's hopes are gratified and Messiah has appeared. Not that this is a mere national thing. Israel, in notion at least, always occupied a prophetic relation to the whole world; and the Christ whom the Jew expected was absolutely "He that should come," "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," of universal significance and permanent, absolute value for faith. The apostles contemplate no further revelation, none at least unto salvation; so far as that is concerned, they always recur to the historically manifested Christ. Hence one is left with this, that one grand section of the world's history, the unity and nobility of whose purpose can escape no serious student, has its vital and meaningful centre in a single individual; what is prior to him reaches forward to him, what is subsequent recurs to him; he is its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and its end; its be-all and end-all lies in *him*. The apologetic presumption which this suggests is plain.

(2.) Christ's character, especially in its self-assertiveness, has just been referred to; but it may be emphasised separately, and one or two points noted by way of recalling the impression of the common argument. Not to speak of His direct claim to Divinity, observe, for example, His sublime egoism; how He does not point men to the truth, but, assuring them that He is the Truth, calls them to Himself, makes belief on Himself to be the great thing for a man, consistently preaches not principles of human living merely, but above all *Himself*. His unselfishness, no doubt, is perfect, the reference to others being so strong with Him as almost to place Him outside the human struggle; yet this no way interferes with, indeed

it is the very basis of, an infinite self-consciousness which makes it a more critical thing for others than for Himself that He is here at all. Note, too, His absolute self-confidence. His is the most stupendous programme man ever set himself —He is, once for all, to reveal God, to save man, and amongst men to found God's everlasting kingdom; yet He goes about it all with most complete assurance, not for a moment betraying a hesitant or tentative air, and at the end declares His work to be "finished." Indeed, there is that about Christ's proclamation of Himself in face of which it is hard to resist the impulse to own Him Lord. Just think of the majesty that surges through the oft-repeated, simple words, "I am come." "I am come" to show men the Father,—to save the lost,—that perishing men might have life. The quiet words are throbbing with Divinity; their voice is as the voice of many waters. They are unique, and explicable surely in only one way; what other man ever announced himself as "come" into our life for this or that? Consider, for example, His great words, "I am come not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil"—how, surveying the entire stretch and compass of God's revelation of grace so far as it had gone, He calmly gathers up all its meaning upon Himself, and, clad in the hoary purpose of two thousand years, announces Himself as the Son sent in the fulness of the times, —and say whether anything short of the centurion's admission will suffice. And if declarations so plain need any further demonstration that more than humanity is in this man, let them find it in those fugitive utterances and suggestive implications which, because so evidently unintentional, are all the more demonstrative; as when, for example, He turns to the Father with the words, "All Thine are mine;" or again, to us men, "If a man love Me he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We—Jehovah and I—*We* will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Can you believe that He who utters these words is only a Jewish carpenter 'prentice, who died young?

(3.) Reference has also been made to the apostles' claim on Christ's behalf, and it may be dismissed in a single sen-

tence. Its importance, however, must not be under-rated. It is identical with Christ's own claim, and with what Judaism demanded. There is no feature of their Christology which is not implied in the gospels, and very little of it which is not implied in the Synoptists, even apart from John. Their several systems of thought hinge alike upon Christ, and their various views of Christ are in essence one. From the first moment when with persuasive voice He called them from their nets or their tax-gathering, their notions of Him grew in a quite singular and wonderful way; developing and expanding as He discovered His unsearchable nature and infinite energising before their minds, until their apprehension swelled to the proportions of His being, and He stood before them as Godhead revealed, men's Maker and Providence, Redeemer and Judge. This can only be stated here, but the statement is easily verifiable. And if it be true, then we have either to accept their representation of Christ as correct, or to accuse the apostles, and with them the Christian Church generally, not merely of a serious misunderstanding, which would be quite possible, but of a blasphemous folly, which is less credible.

Biblical Christology, therefore, I would conclude, is the central apologetic argument; essentially so at all times, especially so at present. From first to last Christ is the Bible's sum and substance, its very heart of hearts, the consistent outcome of the whole course of Divine transaction with men known as Revelation, and thereby He is His own best evidence. To see somewhat into Christ's character and meaning, and His manifold relation to that entire section of history in which God has dealt with men in grace, is, I conceive, to stand upon apologetic ground from which neither philosophy nor criticism can drive one.

4. Lastly, I remark that Christ is the centre of the Christian life.

Here it would be natural to speak of Christ as the Head of the Church, which is His body. For the religious life is not to Christianity an individual, isolated thing, but organic;

those whom Christ redeems form a great living whole, each in fellowship with each, because all in fellowship with Him. Hence, I say, it would be natural to consider Christ here as the centre and life of His Church, the Blesser of all her arrangements and ordinances and sacraments, the Guardian of all her interests, the Guide of her progress, the Maker of her destiny, causing the whole meaning of things to centre in her, and the issue of things to minister to her good; as, in short, Head over all things for the Church's sake, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. But I do not attempt here to be systematic, and meanwhile I wish rather to make one or two observations upon the personal aspect of the case, with the view of emphasising the fact that Christianity professes not only to give to men, for the sustaining of their religious life, and so of all their life, a gracious and powerful influence, but to make that life only one long course of free intercourse and interchange between them and a gracious and powerful Person.

The theory of the Christian life is probably best expressed by the old definition, "Union and communion with Christ in grace and glory." Christian life, that is, is life in Christ; a real fellowship and joint-inheritance with Christ as regards His spiritual knowledge and holiness and blessedness, made good in the actual history and experience of each man, but based upon a prior ideal, even eternal relationship to Christ, in virtue of which each man, in principle and in effect (or as before God), passed through Christ's life and death, and was involved in their meaning as He was. The doctrine of the *unio mystica*, however, is treated at length, in one of its aspects, in the following paper, and the simple point here to be referred to may be indicated without its help.

That point is, that the Christian life derives solely from Christ, is originated and maintained solely by Him, and apart from Him does, specifically as such, cease to be. Take the critical doctrine of conversion. Conversion, so far, has its analogues in common experience. It not uncommonly happens that, apart from properly spiritual matters, a man breaks with an old way of life and adopts a new; is startled

by the discovery of a new faculty within him, and the opening up of a new prospect without; is caught for a new enthusiasm and fired with a new hope;—and this, so far as it goes, may be covered by the term "conversion." In true spiritual conversion the mind is subdued by the inherent authority of the truth, the heart is irresistibly fired with a new passion, the whole man is seized and mastered by a new conception and purpose of life and destiny. But this is not the whole matter. To speak of it so is only to describe the process by its effects, not to define it by its causes; this is a passing "from darkness to marvellous light," but how is the transition accomplished? Scripture is not silent here. A man's first apprehension of the truth, it says, is not a mere act of his mind going out to lay hold on what will bring light and peace to his spirit; nor is it a mere apprehension of him by the truth, as if it with invisible hands could seize his mind and mould his belief. It is an apprehension of him at the hand of Him who is the Truth; an apprehension of the whole man of him—his intellect and imagination, his belief and emotion and will, his whole being and self—by the risen and living Christ. This is Paul's philosophy of conversion. His case was a strangely complex and sudden one, and not, surely, to be explained by merely natural causes—as witness the attempts which have been made in that direction. At the time, probably, he could not definitely have explained to himself what the spiritual revolution that had happened him meant. But thirty years later, when the fact of his conversion had been confirmed to him, and the meaning of it had grown upon him, he theorised the whole matter thus: I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. A blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, I breathed out threatenings and slaughters against the Church of Christ! in a fatally mistaken religious fanaticism I rushed on blindly and madly against the Christ, hurling myself upon Him with all the weight of Judaism, as I thought, behind me. And then, in the full tide of my hideous opposition, I was arrested; a strong Hand was laid upon me; suddenly and once for all I was grasped by Christ Jesus.

Conversion, then, indicates the instituting of a new relationship between God and man, a relationship which is consciously mutual. Other phrases relative to conversion imply the same thing—*e.g.*, "ye must be born again," "it pleased God to reveal His Son in Me." Man, in conversion, takes up a new attitude toward God, but only because God has taken up a new attitude toward him, and set a new agency at work upon him. But God here acts in Christ; all His redeeming activities are realised in and operate through Him. In other words, the Christian life in its very beginning proves Christ's present, living power to redeem by the personal exercise of it upon a man's spirit.

And it is nowise different with all the various gifts and graces of the Christian life. These are not just in the air, dropping somehow into a man's conviction and emotion. They are definitely and truly gifts, gifts of a gracious Lord who knows His own personally, and deals with them individually according to their need. Faith, penitence, forgiveness, righteousness, life, knowledge, security, joy,—in short, all furtherance whatsoever in things spiritual comes by way of gift from Him who is exalted for that end, and who metes out grace as occasion requires. They come one and all directly from Him, and bring into relation to Him; they multiply and complicate the relation between His follower and Himself, making their fellowship to become more full, complete, blessed. Indeed, they just serve to make Christ *more* to the Christian, and to develop the latter's apprehension and reception of Him. What the Christian is enriched with when he makes any advance, say in spiritual knowledge, is really a richer, more determinate knowledge of Christ. To him truth is living and personal; the whole system of it has taken shape and life and voice, announcing itself in the great words, "I am the Truth." So, when a deeper, stronger religious life is called forth in him in any way, this but means that he has partaken more fully of the Divine nature of Him who is the Life, and now commands greater ability than before to adopt Paul's "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." In none of the heaven-given experi-

ences of the Christian life can you view the gift as apart from Christ; rather in each does He give *Himself* in this or that character, for this or that end; making Himself "wisdom" or "righteousness," or ought else that is needed, and acquiring thereby His right to the name of "*the* gift of God," "His unspeakable gift."

So that, perhaps, the matter might be expressed thus: that the whole grand fact and process of redemption is a great sphere of gifts, the elements of which are many. The experiences in grace of the believer presently under discipline and working out his salvation go to make up this solid sphere of spiritual benefit; but the chief and central element of all is the unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus. It is here they all come to unity, here they all are vitalised; apart from Him they could not be; their one function is to bring into fellowship with Him and apprehension of Him, or rather to *be* that fellowship and apprehension. To sever the Christian life from Christ, then, is impossible. You have, say, a flower in your hands which you have plucked up by the roots and carefully preserved entire. You have broken no fibre, crushed no petal, torn no leaf; it lies before your eye complete, a living fragment of beauty. But you destroy your flower; you break its slender stalk, rend the fibres of its roots, tear its leaves to shreds, crush its fragrant blossom, and again you have your flower before you. But not the flower it was. You may have lost no leaf or fibre, may have preserved its every petal, but the life that vitalised it all is gone, and with it its unity and fragrance and beauty. So with the Christian life, the gifts of it, and *the* gift. They all lead up to Him, He fulfils and vitalises them. The whole spiritual life brings us directly face to face with a personal Redeemer; all we have in this respect, as in others, comes from Him, and is to be returned with usury; in every element and experience of it we have personal contact and dealing with Him; through all His gifts and graces, through all our worship and effort we reach *Him;* life, *i.e.*, to the Christian, is definite, true, actual fellowship with God-in-Christ.

I make this remark, familiar as it must be to us all, and over-practical as it may seem to some, because I am deeply impressed with the necessity we are under in our own life, and therefore in our endeavours as Christian ministers to help the lives of others, of holding fast by and clearly proclaiming a risen and living and present Lord. At a time like the present, when the interrogative mood is so largely dominant, and the tendency is so strong to leave all the great questions open, men come to content themselves though a query be put to all their faiths, and to consider that the highest virtue attainable for them is to hope for the time when solid and solemn conviction shall once again have possession, and meanwhile to possess their soul in patience. And if any too serious for such dilettantism strive to attain something substantial which, with assured peace, they can rest their heart upon, the temptation is natural and strong not to aim at great things in this respect, but to be satisfied with a a minimum. Studying the life and character of Christ, *e.g.*, such men may not be content with a shallow rationalism, but neither will they allow themselves to be persuaded that here is veritably a God-man. They probably do not once definitely face the grand question in its various bearings, whether this be or be not God come into human life to help them. That possibility they prejudge, and for the rest they take up a middle position: Christ is to them a phenomenon, not supernatural, but quite extraordinary. He was not God, but he certainly was the first to expound—and he did it with fulness, and force, and beauty—how man ought to stand related to his God, and on what lines generally his life should go. As teaching the true doctrine of man's life, and embodying it in an eminent degree in his own, they will accept him; they will take the great *lessons* which by word and deed he taught, gladly and thankfully; but beyond that they will leave all in uncertainty and haze.

Now, it is no part of my business here to argue with such persons. For myself, I believe that if reason and moral earnestness be allowed full play, and the actual facts be honestly dealt with, no halting-place will be found till we

and in Peter's admission, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And those whom I now address presumably agree with me. But what I wish with all emphasis to say is, that such a view as the above, though it has much truth in it, and may be found helpful and even sufficient by some, does not rise to the height of the Christian assurance. It is not the account which Christianity, *de facto*, gives of itself. Christianity gives us no dead Christ to be redeemed by and to live for, one whose word and influence perhaps have lasted and come down even to our own day, but who himself is for ever gone. It says that *God* was and still is this Christ, for ever reconciling the world unto Himself. It says that its Founder lives, lives here and now, and ever lives to save and make intercession—personally to speak the word of life to the dead in sins, to scatter the darkness of uncertainty, to strengthen and cheer in sorrow. So that the Christian life is one into which a real Divine personal power has entered; one which is hid with the living Christ in the living God. And what in preaching we have to aim at is, not to lay before men's eyes mere general principles of human living, however right, nor yet, in the first instance at least, to puzzle them with complex metaphysics or minute doctrine, however true, but to persuade them, on grounds of common history and a common religious experience bearing fruit all around, that their Maker and Judge having loved them and died for them still loves them and lives for them, longing with a grave, unspeakable tenderness that they should take Him unto their broken, meagre, failing lives, that so He might take them unto His.

If it be true, as I have roughly tried to show, that the personal, living Christ is the centre of Christianity—the unifying, vitalising, and commanding centre of its Revelation, its Theology, its Apologetic, and its Life—then many things would seem to follow. May I be pardoned if, in conclusion, I draw attention to two of the more practical of these.

(1.) We must live Christ. We must live, *i.e.*, as men whose life derives from Christ, and whose entire view of life is

founded on His and guaranteed by Him. We must be His disciples and His followers, eager to learn of Him, waiting on His will. We must live as men who have been redeemed by Christ, who have had the meaning of life solved and the adverse forces of life broken for them by God come in the flesh, and whose hearts are filled with the high hope of a great destiny, for that we have been called by the faithful God unto the fellowship of His Son. We must show our unbounded confidence in Him, our strong assurance. We must make it clear that in all the elements of our life He has the mastery; that our past is all atoned by Him, the present maintained and gladdened, the future well assured. In all things we must serve Him, and everywhere give Him the pre-eminence. Self-seeking is infinitely unworthy in a world where grace reigns, and it strikes at the root of the life of faith—"How can ye believe if ye seek honour from men and not from God?" Life here and hereafter, and through and through, must be so permeated with Christ, that apart from Him it would to us be meaningless, full only of mystery and pain. In short, our definition and description of it must be the apostle's—to us to live, that must be Christ. We must be and do all this as Christian men, as Jesus Christ's men; we must be and do this also as His ministers, and more especially as such

(2.) We must preach Christ. We must preach Him as a living, present, powerful Redeemer, eminently fitted to lighten all darkness, and break all bondage, and relieve all trouble. We must, following apostolic example and His own, preach Himself; in the manifold meaning, of course, of His nature and work, but above all Himself—the living, loving, mighty Person, able and willing to the uttermost. We must preach Him in strength of faith and with enthusiasm. What our day needs, gentlemen, is convictions—assured, honest, heart-felt convictions—to take the place of open questions and frigid opinions, and be something in men which they could live by and might die for. Let us help our generation to them; tenderly, and with the sympathy of men who have felt, perhaps, the strain and distress of their time, but with strong earnestness too, and the high confidence of those in

whom God has been pleased to reveal His Son, who is the Truth. Let us labour in this great matter strenuously while our little day lasts; and at the end it may be—rather it must be—that we also shall receive the crown of life.

Closing Address.

UNION TO CHRIST THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

By Thomas Gregory, M.A.

IT has always been acknowledged by all Christians that some connection with Christ is necessary to the entering into the enjoyment of His redemption, and it is commonly held that the consummation of redemption depends upon a union with Christ which takes effect in sanctification. The name *Unio Mystica* has its usual application rather to the consummation than to the initiation of redemption: St. Paul's phrase, "This is a great mystery," is understood of the relation of Christ to the glorified Church. But the name ought not to be so limited, for, even in the passage referred to, Christ's redemptive work for the Church is given as an evidence of His oneness with it, so that this mystical union of believers into one body with their Lord has an application extending far beyond the conscious derivation of life from Him which is begun in regeneration. It is the object of this essay to show how necessary the idea is to a satisfactory statement of the doctrine of Justification.

Union with Christ, or, rather, union with God, was the leading aim of mediæval mystics. This was no doctrine of the grounds on which we are made partakers of Christ's benefits; their seeking of it was rather a practical rule for attaining happiness. They regarded it as equivalent to the full enjoyment of redemption, not as the way of getting access to redemption. The Catholic Church, on the other

hand, offered to her obedient children the very embodiment of redemptive union with Christ, both in the entering into it and in progressive growth to perfection. Here was the body of Christ on earth; baptism admitted men to the privilege of membership; the Sacraments maintained constantly the vital union thus formed. And equally, though in a different way, the Reformation Churches offered as their Gospel both admission into a saving relation to Christ and realisation of union with Him in spiritual life,—the one by faith, the other by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Again, the union that mystics spoke of was one which did not take into account the nature of the things to be united. Self-determining wills cannot be united as material substances are, not even as particles of liquid, which lose themselves in the whole, nor yet chemically, nor as forces are combined. And the mystics thought of a union with God which should be a getting rid of individuality. Not only the great mystics of the fourteenth century, Eckart and Tauler and Nicholas of Basle, but those also who founded the Sect of the Free Spirit a hundred and fifty years earlier, and the later Quietists,—different in other respects, the Quietists as remarkable for their piety as the Sect of the Free Spirit for their impiety,—all, so far as they tried to express their religious ideas, had this in common, that they made absorption into God their aim, and failed to solve the problem of man's relation to God because they ignored its conditions. They supposed an identity of the Divine will and the human that would make man no longer responsible for his actions; they would have secured a union of the two by destroying one of the factors, for will would cease to be will if it were not self-determined.

The Roman Church had a real interest of true religion on its side when it condemned mysticism. However imperfectly, and even if from bad motives, it always maintained human individuality and responsibility over against the necessity which it equally maintained of some sort of union with Christ and with God. Side by side with its almost mechanical arrangements for giving men the benefits of grace, the Roman Church gave even a semi-pelagian import-

ance to human freedom. It required obedience, at least, of its children; it required a good state of the will for the effectual reception of the ordinances which at once related men to Christ and entitled them to His salvation. The Church of Rome, then, has three important elements of the doctrine of union to Christ where mysticism has only one: first, a distinct way of forming the tie with Christ which entitles to salvation; second, arrangements for the continuous derivation of life from Christ in virtue of the union formed and perpetuated; third, doctrinal provision for the maintenance of a real personal responsibility within this relation to Christ. Mysticism attends only to the second.

Now the Reformers equally insisted on the necessity of a relation to Christ, but this must be spiritual in the first instance and not external through the Church. They laid the foundation of conscious partaking of Christ's benefits in the uniting act of faith; they taught a continuous union to Him by the operation of the Holy Spirit; and that faith also issued in a voluntary holiness of life, so that the union which entitled to redemption was a real free union of man's will to God's. Yet the appearance of Antinomianism alongside of the Reformation showed how essential this last characteristic was, and how it required even more emphasis than it got, namely, that man's union to God must be a free union, or it is no union at all. Especially when men were lately emancipated from the supporting shackles of Church obedience, and were trying to walk alone, it was necessary that they should understand that they could not have a relation to Christ that would save their souls while their wills—the distinguishing feature of the soul—were thrown overboard to shift for themselves as of no importance. And a right conception of what this saving union involved was the more necessary, because free grace as opposed to merit, and irresistible grace as opposed to an initiative on man's part in receiving it, were positions which had to be made much of at that time. Since, therefore, faith had to serve in the Reformed scheme instead of visible Church fellowship, on a right apprehension of what faith meant it depended

that men should see the impossibility of accepting the advantages of a Christian's state without its responsibilities. Thus the idea of faith, as it is the means of forming the tie of conscious union, a union which must be in the region of the will, is very important for the present inquiry.

Different views have also been taken of the manner in which this union is brought about from the Divine side. It was held by Fathers of the Alexandrian school, in a philosophical rather than a theological interest, that the Eternal Word, who was in a manner present in all rational creation, had by his incarnation brought a reinforcement, as it were, of reason into the world, and set a number of spiritual forces a-working which influenced and regenerated those whom they reached—the Logos uniting itself to them. This line of thought was taken up by Realists in the Middle Ages, who, according to their system, attributed a real entity to the principles of Christ's religion, and conceived them to be present and producing their effects since He brought them into existence.* And Schwenkfeld, a mystic of Reformation times, gave a similar account of actual physical influences that effect, since the time of Christ, a real connection between Him and His people. The Roman Church, on the other hand, needs no such ideal bonds to bridge the distance in time between Christ and us. It is itself the body of Christ, itself wields the influence that draws men to Christ, and itself admits them into union with Him, and visibly nourishes the union when formed. The Reformed Church offers the Holy Spirit, conveying a direct spiritual influence from Christ to individuals, as its only explanation of the manner of this union: Providence, and the Scripture, and preaching, and Christian fellowship have a certain value in promoting it; faith on our part is the means; but the only set-off that we have against the obstacles which distance in time and absence in space oppose to direct connection with Christ is, that by His Holy Spirit He is present to each man here, and present now.

We are bound to begin an account of the teaching of the

* Hodge, vol. ii. 582, and reff.

Reformers with Anselm and Abelard, for to these and their successors, after Augustine, it is due that the reasonableness of salvation was so brought out as to enable men of strong convictions, when they came, to take their stand upon it and defy the dominant superstition. Anselm proved elaborately that there was salvation in Christ, but he did not show how we were to get it. He said Christ gives it to His kinsmen. Again, the partakers of redemption are those who imitate Christ. We must remember that Anselm was a churchman, and so long as a man obeys the Roman Church the question never rises whether he is one of Christ's. Then Abelard described the union with Christ which makes a saving connection with Him as one of love produced in us by God. In reply, Bernard did not deny the union, but denied that its realisation in love on our part was at all a ground of our forgiveness. Emphasising Christ's work, he asserts our connection with it and benefit from it by reason of our oneness with Christ in God's eyes: "The satisfaction of one is reckoned to all, since that one bore the sins of all; and he who offended is no longer different from him who made satisfaction, because the one Christ is both head and body; *satisfecit ergo caput pro membris, corpus pro visceribus suis.*"* The language of Thomas Aquinas is very similar: "As a natural body is a unity, so is the Church, the mystical body of Christ, reckoned, along with Christ her Head, as one person."† Both of these explain the work of Christ by asserting His oneness with His Church, but they neither give an intelligible account of that oneness, nor indicate the condition of our entering into it. There was nothing to suggest such an elaboration of the doctrine, when the Church was there making union with Christ both visible and attainable.

When Luther opposed a spiritual relation to Christ to the Romish mechanism of grace, one sees how the demand must arise for a representation of the reality of that relation which would be manifest to the intellect, if no longer, as of old, to the senses. Luther could only offer the promises of the Word to the reception of faith, backing them with his per-

* Quoted in Ritschl's "Justification," p. 54. † *Ibid.*

sonal testimony. To have insisted on union with the body of Christ as the condition of receiving God's favour would have been simply to point men back to Rome. His whole contention was that we must first receive forgiveness as a free justifying of the ungodly, and that interest would lead him to affirm the very opposite of union with Christ,—the very greatest separation from Christ, in the self-consciousness of a man on the point of conversion. And yet Luther taught that faith was the work of God's Spirit; that in it a union to Christ was being formed; and that it was to the subject of it a personal and spiritual receiving of Christ, and the very condition of his forgiveness. Ritschl quotes two passages in which union with Christ is dwelt upon: "Faith in Christ brings it about that He lives and works in me, just as a healing salve works on a sick body. Thus there is made with Christ one flesh and one body by a hidden unspeakable transformation of our sins into His righteousness." * "Christ says, I am the way, the truth, and the life; He says not, I give thee the way, the truth, and the life, as though He stood outside of me. He must be these things in me, and abide and live in me." †

Faith brings about union, and only through union to Christ is there forgiveness,—this was underlying all Luther's teaching. There was salvation in Christ, and only by receiving, by joining Christ could we have it. But he laid the weight of justification always on Christ, and never on the union, the transition seemed so dangerously easy to resting on the fruits of union in ourselves as part ground of justification. Thus we have substitution and imputation for Luther's final doctrinal expression of our justifying connection with Christ.

Ritschl gives a quotation from Zwingli,‡ in which he speaks of our share in Christ as His members at our first coming to God for justification; but we may pass at once to Calvin for the fullest statement in Reformation times of the importance of union with Christ to the doctrine of justification. He says: "When Christ enlightens us to faith by His

* Page 174. † Page 176. ‡ Page 151.

Spirit's power, He at the same time joins us to His body, so that we become sharers of all His benefits."* Again: "Joined to the body of Christ, believers are reckoned righteous freely. For as to justification, faith is a purely passive thing, bringing nothing of ours to win God's favour, but receiving from Christ what we have not."† "Why do you put forgiveness of sins after the Church?" it is asked in the Geneva Catechism. "Because no one obtains forgiveness unless he has been also before joined to the people of God, and continually preserves to the end oneness with the body of Christ, and so is a true member of the Church."‡ Thus Calvin makes faith consist in union, and union the ground of forgiveness. In opposition, again, to Osiander's doctrine, that this justifying union was the sanctifying indwelling of Christ, Calvin gives his fullest and final account of the real nature of it: "Christ becoming ours makes us sharers in the gifts that He brings with Him. Therefore, we do not look at Him far off outside of us, that His righteousness may be reckoned to us, but because we are clothed with Him, and engrafted into His body; because He has deigned to make us one with Himself; therefore we enjoy a partnership of righteousness with Him."§ But when this oneness of the believer with Christ is to be particularly described, we still get only substitution and imputation as its whole contents, and, of course, a clear and constant denial that the union of the will to Christ, as realised through the Spirit in sanctification, is in any sense the ground of forgiveness. And so justification is left to depend on merely the asserted oneness of Christ and His people, without the connection being developed. Union is dated to begin when faith begins; but it is not explained on what ground this beginning is made; on what ground faith itself, as the gift of God, is given to sinners.

As the Reformers had given little attention to the analysis of the tie that connects Christ's people to Him, being content to call it faith and define negatively what it was not, so the

* Inst. iii. 2, 35.
† Inst. iii. 13, 5
‡ Q. 104.
§ iii. 11, 10.

Church symbols give it no central theological place, though the fact that there is a tie is of course the underlying vital thought of every system. Lutheran symbols, as we might expect, make less use of it than those which derive from Calvin. In the Lutheran Form of Concord there is a visible struggle to express that union to Christ is of the essence of faith; "confiding in Christ," "laying hold of Christ," for instance, are given as equivalent to faith. But there is no attempt made to relate this to the other parts of the doctrine of justification. In the Calvinistic Second Helvetic Confession we find: "Faith receives Christ our righteousness; —the Lord shows abundantly in John vi. that we receive Christ by faith, when He puts eating for believing, and believing for eating; for as we receive food by eating, so we participate in Christ by believing." Again, in the Calvinistic Heidelberg Catechism we have it said that those who are saved are engrafted into Christ by true faith; in another place, "the Holy Spirit makes me partaker of Christ"; and in the well-known first question, "In soul and body, whether I live or die, I am not mine own, but belong unto my most faithful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

But in none of these has the thought so important a place as in the old Scotch Catechisms. Thus in Craig's Catechism:—

"*Q.* What thing doth faith work?—*A.* Our perpetual and inseparable union with Christ.

Q. What worketh this union with Christ.—*A.* A mutual communion with Him and His graces.

Q. What worketh this communion?—*A.* Remission of sins and imputation of justice."

And in another place:—

"*Q.* What need is there of union with Christ?—*A.* Otherwise we cannot enjoy His benefits."

In Davidson's Catechism, used at "Salt Prestoun" from the year 1580, faith is described: "It is the hearty receiving of Christ, . . . whereby He becomes one with us, and we one with Him; He our Head, and we His members.—Can we have no salvation except we have participation and be con-

joined with Christ; so that we must be His and He ours?—None at all; for, seeing the cause of our salvation is in the person of Christ only, and never in ourselves, but by participation of Him, we can never be partakers of salvation but by our conjunction and union with Him, whereby He becoming one with us and we one with Him we get through Him the full right of salvation and life everlasting." After speaking of Christ's taking our sins and our getting His righteousness, it is asked, "Whereof cometh this communion and mutual fellowship between Christ crucified and us?—Of the union and strait conjunction between us, as of the head with the body. For we are one with Him, and He is ours, and we are His." If Craig and Davidson did not much analyse this oneness, they were at all events never tired of asserting it; and they saw the importance of it as the ground of that participation in Christ which is so often based on imputation only. The following again shows how clear they were in attributing to Christ alone what is proper to Him: "Then there is no part of our righteousness left without the apprehension or grip of faith, seeing it is all wholly in the person of Christ apprehended by faith?—It is so; and so we are perfectly saved by the works which Christ did for us in His own person, and no ways by the good works which He works in us with and after faith." There is added in the margin, "Here is the main point and ground of our disagreement with the papists." The writers of these Scotch Catechisms seem to have kept the balance between insistence on Christ's work and insistence on union to Him better than it is done in any other Reformation document.

If our Confession of Faith had been drawn up in Scotland it would probably have given a more prominent place than it does to this element in the doctrine of justification. The Headship of Christ is little dwelt on except in regard to Church government. Our fellowship with Him is stated only in the 26th chapter as the ground of the Communion of Saints, and hinted at in treating of the Sacraments. Of course, the thought of union to Christ on the part of His people underlies the whole; but it is not given its place in

the scheme of doctrine. Christians are referred to as Christ's people, His seed, those whom God has given Him; but when in the 26th chapter real oneness with Christ is mentioned, this thought which our Scotch Catechisms were so fond of is immediately repressed by a caution that it must not be understood as making us partakers of His Godhead. The idea is treated as if it needed to be checked rather than that men should be encouraged to centre their thoughts upon it.

The Larger Catechism, however, makes amends by the position and value which it gives to union. From the 65th to the 90th question, the whole appropriation of the benefits of redemption is made to depend expressly on union to Christ, and the communion or communication of grace that results from it. It is described (Q. 66), "The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their Head and Husband." And justification is said to "manifest" it, so that the union is prior; still, this is the conscious union of regeneration that is spoken of, which has its beginning in time, and the idea is not brought in at all to explain the justice of Christ's sufferings, nor yet to connect the beginning of the new life with forgiveness.

It remains to show more positively that this union is a theological postulate, a Scripture doctrine, and a real thing.

The theological importance of the idea, then, is that it solves the contradiction that there is on the one hand in the suffering of the innocent, and on the other in the acquittal of the guilty, and that it gives a ground in reason for the co-temporaneousness of forgiveness and regeneration,—we need no longer simply assert that they go together, we can connect them by showing their common source; at the same time the place of faith in the work of the Spirit is made more clear.

Professor Laidlaw has quoted the opinion of the late Dr. Candlish, that "if we think of justification as external, it seems a mere legal fiction." Certainly the excessive use of

the word "imputation" in describing our justifying connection with Christ cannot be said to have reduced the element of externality. The true line of defence of the doctrine must be to demonstrate the reality of the connection in virtue of which the transfer takes place of our guilt to Christ, of His possession of God's favour to us. It is in this interest that Dr. Cunningham says: "The righteousness of Christ, including the whole of His perfect and meritorious obedience to the law, as well as His suffering, was a great and infinitely important reality. It was intended to effect and secure the salvation of all those whom God had chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is in due time . . . bestowed upon each of them, through his union to Christ by faith, not in any mere fiction of law, but in actual deed; and being thus really bestowed upon them, it is of course held or reckoned as theirs, and thus becomes the ground of forgiveness." * The unreality that associated itself with imputation is here fortified by resting it upon bestowal; and just so this conception of bestowal in turn needs to rest upon a real union with Christ, in whom, and not outside of whom, we have redemption.

And similarly we do not conceive rightly, nor with stability, of Christ's sufferings, unless we hold to His union with His people. Conscience is not satisfied otherwise; "make me so thoroughly one with Him that I cannot possibly take guilt to Him without taking it to myself, and then, and not till then, shall my soul return into her rest." † And reason will have objections to the suffering of one for many, unless he is in a real way identified with them.

The difficulty about relating faith, and forgiveness, and regeneration is also solved by using this conception. Faith seems to precede forgiveness, and forgiveness to precede the bestowal of the Spirit and the birth of the new nature; and yet faith, the first term in the series, is a gift of God, a work of the Spirit, and so presupposes the last. But when we think of a real union between Christ and those who have

* Hist. Theol. ii. 55; *cf.* "In Christ," by Dr. A. J. Gordon, pp. 18, 19.

† Dr. H. Martin's "Atonement," p. 187, quoted by Gordon.

been, are, and shall be His people, we understand that His favour to them,—that God's favour to them in virtue of their oneness with Christ,—is not hindered from working before their faith, and in their faith, as well as after. They are not forgiven till they believe, because forgiveness requires two conscious parties, but as far as God is concerned they are forgiven eternally. Besides, it is only then that the law of faith can exclude boasting when all the conditions of the new life in a man are explicitly or implicitly recognised to be of God, and only so can we have confidence before Him. "God does not work upon the soul by itself; bringing to bear upon it, while yet in its alienation and isolation from Him, such discipline as shall gradually render it fit to be reunited to Him. He begins rather by reuniting it to Himself, that through this union He may communicate to it that divine life and energy without which all discipline were utterly futile." * Thus our prior union to Christ works faith in due time, and faith is a conscious entering into the union, and so is the beginning of conscious union and the condition of conscious enjoyment of God's favour. And because faith is itself the work of God's Spirit, we can see how it is the beginning of regeneration and a joining of the will to Christ. To be in Christ *quo ad* reconciliation, and not to be in Him *quo ad* newness of life would be, in the language of the Genevan Catechism, to divide Christ's person. This is made clear when a saving relation to Christ is expressed as union to Him.

Now, some part of this purpose has been served in our theology by the so-called federal union. In virtue of this Christ fully took His people's place; in virtue of it these His people are one by one made participators in faith and forgiveness and actual union. The use of it in theology has, however, these two drawbacks: First, that it is apt to be opposed to actual union as a separate thing; and second, that it has

* Gordon, p 11. Although this statement of the matter seems to make the union objective, and so not answering the requirement that it should be a relation of will, the contradiction is apparent only, for the union is wrought in the region of will.

an association of unreality about it; whether that is because it is not sufficiently insisted on and brought forward as a real thing, or whether its vague unsubstantiality is the reason why we cannot with confidence bring it forward. We must be sure of this in our theology—that the thing we base justification upon is a *real* thing; and we find that the Westminster Confession, for instance, which holds the federal union, does not use it much to base our salvation upon, but, keeping it in the back ground, puts forward imputation as the most real and tangible thing it can offer, feeling a certain security in that, because it is a Scriptural idea, and not able to grasp the equally Scriptural and far stronger and broader and more real thought of union, oneness with Christ. There would be no objection to calling our relation to Christ before it becomes conscious a federal union, provided we kept in mind that it is not a different union but the same, and that it is not less real but more real than the actual consciousness of union which is founded upon it, and than the communication of grace and glory that results from it, as the cause is more certainly real than the effect.

Thus we have seen that there is a theological and religious postulate for the existence of a real oneness of Christ's people with him prior to all manifestations of it on Christ's part or in their conscious experience. It will make our theological statement of justification more complete, and it will relate it better to the doctrine of regeneration, if such a union can be established. It would also, as some think, be a more satisfactory way of stating to ourselves devotionally our relation to Christ and His to us—that we receive Him with His benefits rather than His benefits from Him. We are to establish that this union exists by showing that it is a Scripture doctrine, and then that it is verified in its historical effects.

That the life of believers after conversion consists in a spiritual union to Christ there is no need to prove; it is as plainly taught in Scripture as it is fully recognised in theology. Of all the figures by which it is set forth, that of the body and its members is the favourite. Believers are stones

built on Christ, the corner-stone, to make a temple. They are branches grafted into Him, the vine; but Christ had taught, too, that His people partook of His flesh and blood, and Paul comes back again and again to the organic unity of the body with its parts that have an individual life, and yet have that only in virtue of their union to the whole. It is this which best exhibits the complex interdependence of the spiritual structure, which he uses it to illustrate.

That is undoubted. But we have to show that it is of the essence of faith to be an entering into this union, into fellowship of life as well as of redemption; and then that there is a real union of Christ's people to Him, which precedes and accounts for the gift of faith.

In Philippians iii. 9, Paul makes his having the righteousness of faith equivalent to his being found in Christ, and this (ver. 12) he ever "follows after to apprehend." Faith is a taking hold of and joining Christ. Further, his early preaching, recorded in the Acts and reflected in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, exhibits Christ chiefly, if not solely, in the light of a King and God-appointed Judge, in whom there was refuge, by taking and joining whom as their Lord men might be saved.* But most clearly we can see that faith consists in joining Christ, from our Lord's invitation, "Come unto Me," and from His explanation of coming by believing, and of both by eating of His flesh.

Again, this coming to Christ depends on a previous relation to Him. "In God we live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28); "When we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8); "For His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 5). So also the words of Jesus, "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him"; and again, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me," declare a gracious action of God and a responsible attitude of Christ towards those who are sinners. It is all "according to His purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world

* Weiss, "N. T. Theol." § 61. Pfleiderer, vol. i. p. 167.

began" (2 Tim. i. 9), for "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4); on which Goodwin says it is not that we are chosen to be in Christ, nor yet that we are chosen conditionally on believing, but the covenant was really made with us, Christ standing for us; and faith itself is one of the blessings wherewith "He hath blessed us in Christ." "There must therefore be some sense intended whereby we are in Christ before we have faith."*

We now come to consider the manifestations of this union in actual experience which combine with the proof from Scripture to give us a certainty of its objective reality that will answer to the craving of religious feeling for a firm ground outside of ourselves on which to rest our salvation.

There is an attitude of mind in which it is very difficult for us to exhibit to ourselves spiritual things as at all real in the way in which objects of sense are real. In this mood we prefer to think of ourselves as individuals, influenced through our actual faculties to the ordering of our actual life. Christ is the Christ of history, gone from this scene 1800 years ago; we are persons living now; and there seems an element of unreality about a formula that pretends to bridge all time and unite every individual Christian in an actual way with the actual personal Christ. If we want such a union, let us seek it in the continuous self-identity of the Roman Church and its sacraments,—there is, at least, a visible embodiment of union that we can admit to be real. Or, if this external connection with Christ seems to have counterbalancing spiritual disadvantages, let us be content to admit the distance in time and space between Christ and us; we can still take Him for our Master so long as His teaching is handed down to us. As to how God looks at us, or under what forms He thinks of us, it is hard to say, and dangerous to be dogmatic. And the spiritual influence which the risen Christ may send to us—let us call that mysterious gift the Holy Spirit, whose action is like the wind,—we cannot tell whence it comes nor whither it goes.

* Vol. i. p. 66.

These fundamental thoughts of discipleship to Christ and dependence upon His Spirit are sufficient, one would think, for a simple and healthy moral life. But since the Schoolmen and the Reformation—whether it be a blessing or a curse—not theologians only, but men at large have been introspective and self-torturing, and their unrest of conscience and an intellect foolishly at war with wiser emotion have urged them to exhaust the Scripture in search of all the rationality of the action of God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit in our redemption—the question is, What is my tenure of life, and is it stable? Driven in upon itself and its creaturehood the human spirit can find no standing ground, —no warrant for the existence which ordinary language attributes to it over against God. It has accountability without the possibility of merit; it is distinct without being independent. Thus the conceptions of substitution and imputation and love and discipleship fail to give rest to the spirit, because they allow and encourage it to hold itself off from God, as if independent as well as distinct. On the other hand, the assertion that union with Christ is the condition of man's true life, denies his independence in the inmost retreat of his being, and therefore satisfies.

It does not interfere with his individuality, responsibility, and self-identity. But it recognises that he is more than an individual, and that he is not a complete man unless his spirit and his will enter into relationships with other beings and wills. A man is not fully realised unless his life goes out to and is wrapped up in other lives. That does not mean losing his personality; it means losing his selfishness and finding his true life. It means, in regard to union with Christ, that he is like a unit of organism in an organised body; that he lives his own life, yet lives that even by the life of the whole; that in his weakness the whole body suffers, and in the soundness and health of the body he shares.

But this is not the union which we undertook to prove. A new regenerate life in common with Christ is conceivable, but what of the prior union before we became Christ's consciously? This, that the realised sharing in the life of Christ

proves an underlying union; there is a deeper oneness, of which this is the outcome. We may see it in the experience of Christ, and in the history of our own development. Christ suffered for His people when many of them were not born; was He then one with them? He was; His life cannot be explained otherwise. He did not live as an individual, He was not guilty as an individual, He did not suffer the darkness of desertion as an individual. He and His Church were one; He would not be apart from His people; their names were written on His hands. For as a man is perfected and his manhood realised by his spiritual relationships to others, so Christ's nature could not be perfected without His union to all His people. When He took our nature He came under the law of human solidarity, of human brotherhood, and obligation, and love. His body, the Church, is the "fulness," the necessary complement, "of Him that filleth all in all."

And not only so, but to us too, this union has borne fruit before we were able consciously to enter into it. The lives of all of us were in great part moulded centuries before we were born. Our spiritual lives as well as our physical lives depend for their determinate character on influences that began with the beginning of time, and that were in Christ's hand all the while. And in our own life-time, the preparation of grace before we believed and in believing was given us in Christ,—in virtue of our being His. If these things are so, we must look for the ground of Christ's suffering for us and of our receiving life from Him in a real and spiritual and eternal union of Christ to His people.*

This truth has important bearings on our conception of Providence, and so upon the form of the offer of the Gospel. Since all men receive some favour from God, and all this only in Christ—no good coming to our guilty world otherwise,—

* The connection between Christ and His people which is thus proved is better expressed as oneness than as substitution; for the allowance of substitution in the case of sinners itself needs explanation, while the oneness of Christ's people with Him is beyond the sphere of sin. Cf. Goodwin, vol. i. p. 66 *f.*; and Gordon, p. 122, l. 12. Further, this union is not objective and external only, though its existence is proved by things which are matters of history. The whole effects of it are of account as they influence our conscious life afterwards to be developed.

there is a sense in which all men have a part in Christ; and as, in looking back on the way by which we were ourselves led, we can there recognise God's goodness to us in Christ before we were consciously united to Him, so we can look forward to the fields where the wheat is still mingled with tares, out of which, though it seems to us all tares, we yet trust that God will call a people for Himself, and we can think of all men and speak to them as under God's discipline, receiving, in Christ, and with some sort of relation to Him, the kindness of God meant to lead them to repentance. They are not in Christ consciously; they are all of them to some extent within the benefit of a real though still external participation in Him. "The kingdom of God has come near them." We can invite them to a more intimate union; and as in their present state they have life for Christ's sake, so they may have *in Christ* life eternal.

Finally, there is no cause for fear that in making more of Christ we shall make less of His work. Rather, it is impossible that His work should be appreciated till He Himself is so. So long as Christ is nothing to men, they will not take much real interest in anything about Him. The most cogent proof of the efficacy of His sacrifice *for His people* does not affect *them*. But, once aware of a relation in which we stand to Christ,—in which we already stand to Him for our advantage,—and being persuaded to enter into closer union with Him, all that is His becomes significant and interesting to us, for it has become ours.

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